

**Raleigh, NC - Fallen Firefighters Memorial**

I'm honored to be with you this morning for this important statewide observance and to pay special tribute to the firefighters and firefighters' families here today.

The memorial for which we are about to break ground is a powerful reminder of your commitment and dedication to service and of the risks you face every time you respond to a call.

These days, in Washington circles, there is much talk about terrorism and the role our first responders play in preventing and responding to possible attacks. But I am afraid that sometimes the official tributes fall short. For one thing, the rhetoric is not matched by resources. Our local first responders are actually getting less support from Washington than they were before 9/11. That is not acceptable and I have made it my first priority as a member of the Homeland Security Appropriations Subcommittee to change it.

There is also the danger that amid the rhetoric, the stories of everyday heroes get lost. We know that we must prepare in new ways to confront the threat of terrorism, and you are doing that. But we need to remember that you have been there all along – running into burning buildings, dealing with hazardous chemicals, helping people during an ice storm or a hurricane, and doing the work of paramedics before an ambulance gets to the scene.

In short, we owe you. We owe you a huge debt. You put us first, every day.

And to those of you here who have lost a firefighter, I realize that our words, our concern, this memorial will not give you back your loved one and will barely touch your sadness. But please hear our "thank you" and know that we recognize the courage it took for YOU to live with someone who put his or her life on the line every day.

I hope that people will come to this memorial and find it to be a quite place of reflection....a

place where they can remember loved ones and colleagues or a place where they can honor firefighters they will never know....but who are there for them anytime they are called.

I, for one, look forward to returning to this memorial when it's completed later this year. I know many others will do the same, and we thank all of those who have made this day and this memorial possible.